

# Rep. Steffen: Northeast Wisconsin lawmakers call for criminal justice reform

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GREEN BAY – Assembly Republicans from northeast Wisconsin gathered alongside area law enforcement leaders today for a press conference to unveil a package of criminal justice initiatives. The comprehensive reforms aim to improve the system from every angle, from fair and speedy trials to re-entry into the community and workforce.

“At the root of these initiatives is a simple goal: keeping our communities safe,” said Rep. Schraa (R-Oshkosh). “I’m hopeful these reforms will improve our state’s process of rehabilitating individuals to become successful members of society.”

“Cutting our state’s prison population in half – a goal of Governor Evers – would mean putting violent criminals back into our community,” continued Rep. Macco (R-Ledgeview). “Our criminal justice initiatives address the same concerns, while still keeping our Wisconsin families safe.”

Republican legislators, joined by local District Attorneys, judges, and members of the law enforcement community, held a series of news conferences around the state to make the announcement. Locally, Representatives Macco, Nygren, Schraa, Steineke, Steffen, and Tusler were joined by Brown County District Attorney Dave Lasee and Jeff Cano, a regional attorney manager with the State Public Defender’s office.

“Our state is in a critical place when it comes to criminal justice,” said Rep. Steineke

(R-Kaukauna). “These reforms ensure we as a state have the resources to guarantee everyone has access to a fair, speedy trial.”

“As an elected official, it’s a top priority of mine to make sure our communities are safe,” continued Rep. Nygren (R-Marinette). “Whether it’s our state public defenders, district attorneys, or our counties, we’re committed to making sure they have the resources they need.”

The group requested that Governor Evers include the following initiatives in his upcoming state budget request:

- Ensure quicker access to a fair trial: fund new Assistant District Attorney (ADA) positions, increase pay for ADAs and State Public Defenders (SPD), increase private bar rate for county court appointments and SPD appointments
- Expand Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) programs to help offenders who suffer from alcohol and drug issues
- Invest in the retention of correctional officers
- Promote the successful transition back into society through expanded worker training, reentry programs and health initiatives

“These reforms throw support behind evidence-based programs to give individuals a path to recovery,” continued Rep. Steffen (R-Green Bay). “Part of the solution is allowing offenders to enter voluntary substance abuse treatment rather than going to jail.”

“For those who do end up spending time in our prisons, we need to set them up for success when they finish serving their time,” continued Rep. Tusler (R-Harrison). “Our initiatives will put resources into helping them transition back into life as a contributing member of society.”

Governor Evers is expected to release his budget address on Thursday, February 28th in Madison. Assembly Republicans look forward to working with the administration to ensure criminal justice reform is a priority.